

Number of active duty sexual assaults on decline

DOD-wide survey from 2002 shows harassment drop too

By Gerry J. Gilmore

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — Incidences of sexual assault within the active duty military dropped by half between 1995 and 2002, according to a DOD sexual harassment survey released Feb. 25.

The congressionally mandated survey was taken in 2002 and polled 60,000 servicemembers — from private to colonel, Dr. David S.C. Chu, the undersecretary of defense for per-

sonnel and readiness, told reporters at a Pentagon press briefing. About 20,000 servicemembers, he said, responded to the survey.

Chu said the sexual harassment survey is an important instrument that helps DOD “to root out” prohibited behavior, to change attitudes and “to change how people treat each other and to ensure that everyone is treated with the respect that he or she deserves.” The next sexual harassment survey, he said, is slated for 2006.

Rachel Lipari from the Defense Manpower Data Center, who accompanied Chu to the briefing, noted the survey shows a decline from 6 percent to 3 percent since 1995 in the incidence of sexual assault in the armed

services. Also, she said, the survey demonstrates a 22 percent decline in sexual harassment incident rates across the services between 1995 and 2002.

The majority of survey respondents — 79 percent of men and 77 percent of women — noted they’d received anti-sexual harassment training in the past year, remarked Timothy Elig, Lipari’s co-worker, also at the briefing. And at least 75 percent of both men and women respondents reported that their service’s training conveyed “a good understanding of what sexual harassment was, an understanding of what behaviors were offensive and could not be tolerated, that sexual harassment makes it diffi-

cult for servicemembers to perform their duties,” Elig said.

Chu maintained that the 2002 survey demonstrates that the majority of servicemembers polled see their anti-sexual harassment training as being effective.

“And that’s a good news story, because we’ve been investing heavily for some years now ... in training as one of the ways to change behaviors,” Chu said.

During Senate testimony earlier that day, Chu also said the survey shows that most servicemembers have faith that commanders are willing to take appropriate action on issues of sexual harassment and more serious forms of sexual misconduct.

Hotline to help DOD task force establish policy

Armed Forces Press Service

The Department of Defense announced March 5, that an additional toll-free telephone number has been established for individuals who want to contact or provide information to the Department of Defense Task Force on Care for Victims of Sexual Assault.

The number, (800) 497-6261, is staffed from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. EST, Monday through Friday. The department’s hot line will supplement those previously established by each of the services.

Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld in January ordered a senior-level inquiry into the reported sexual assaults in Iraq and Kuwait, and how the armed services treat victims of sexual assault. The Army and Air Force have opened similar investigations.

Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness David S.C. Chu said that the findings of the 90-day review are due by April 30th.

“Every servicemember deserves to be treated with the utmost respect and dignity,” Chu said.

“Sexual assault is criminal conduct and will not be tolerated in the Department of Defense,” he said

Chu believes the information from the call center will assist the task force and defense officials in developing policies and programs to improve assistance for victims of assaults and enhance efforts at prevention.

Exchange service offers year-round support to deployed troops

‘Gifts from the Homefront’ offers way to support Soldiers

AAFES Release

DALLAS — One organization continues to deliver aid to those who need it most. America’s deployed troops know that the Army and Air Force Exchange Service’s assistance knows no season.

“Even after the holidays pass, ‘the best customers in world’ can continue to count on AAFES’ unprecedented presence in Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom,” remarked Lt. Col. Debra Pressley. “AAFES’ support is available year round.”

An example of that support is the “Gifts from the Homefront” program,

which has allowed AAFES to offer a level of support not seen in its 108-year history.

“The ‘Gifts from the Homefront’ program is unique because it allows anyone to make a direct impact on the morale of deployed troops,” said Pressley.

Since the program’s inception, more than 17,000 Americans have made a contribution to the “Gifts from the Homefront” program. This outpouring of support has pushed total donations to \$332,475. The troops are, of course, the ultimate beneficiaries of the gift certificate program.

Because the gift certificates can be used for merchandise already stocked at AAFES locations in Iraq, Afghanistan and other areas, “Gifts from the Homefront” are a safe alternative to traditional care packages that place unnecessary strain on the military

mail system. Furthermore, soldiers are sure to get exactly what they need with the certificates that can be applied to a wide range of products.

Reports from Iraq indicate that the certificates that have been distributed are being used for the latest CDs and DVDs, comfort items such as snacks and beverages, and phone cards for those all-important calls home.

Americans who wish to offset the cost of phone cards and other items of convenience and necessity can contribute to the “Gifts from the Homefront” by simply logging on to **www.aafes.com** or calling (877) 770-4438 to purchase gift certificates in \$10, \$20, \$25 or \$50 denominations. From there, the “Gift from the Homefront” is sent to an individual servicemember (designated by the purchaser) or distributed to “any servicemember” through organizations

such as the American Red Cross, Air Force Aid Society or Fisher House.

Troops can use “Gifts from the Homefront” certificates at any of AAFES’ 52 contingency stores in OIF and OEF. Specifically, AAFES is delivering a bit of home to troops with nine stores in Kuwait and 30 in Iraq. The 430 AAFES associates deployed to the region are living and working right alongside the deployed troops.

This commitment to deployed customers resulted in AAFES receiving the 2004 American Spirit Award from the National Retail Federation. Past recipients of the prestigious award, which is designed to recognize exceptional achievement and is presented only when circumstances dictate, include former Presidents Jimmy Carter, George Herbert Walker Bush and Sen. Bob Dole.

